

St. Gaspar's Letters

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3951

April 25, 1826
 Archpriest Fr. Gaetano Sanguigni
 Terracina

*Sanguis Jesu Christi emundabit conscientias nostras*¹

Venerable Archpriest²

The most reverend bishop would like to have the public Retreat there in order to stimulate interest in the holy Jubilee year. I shall send a Missionary in May, generally speaking, and you then can, in the meantime, provide pertinent information beforehand.

Give my best regards to the reverend Canons there and to anyone else who has a remembrance of me. Venerable Archpriest, pray a lot for the one who now renews himself, with esteem and respect, as

Your humble devoted and obliged servant

G. C. del Bufalo

M. Ap.

Rome, April 25, 1826

3952

April 26, 1826
 Monsignor Carlo Manassi
 Bishop of Terracina, Sezze and Priverno
 Priverno

Hail to the Blood of Jesus Christ

Venerable Monsignor

I hope that your health is improving. I ask you to have someone assist the person showing this letter of mine. He will be going to Vallecorsa and will need a mount that he, himself, will pay for. Though in quite a hurry, I kiss your hands, venerable Monsignor, and with esteem, I remain

Your humble devoted and obliged servant

G. C. del Bufalo

M. Ap.

Rome, April 26, 1826

3953

May 9, 1826
 Monsignor Carlo Manassi
 Bishop of Terracina, Sezze and Priverno
 Priverno

Hail to the Blood of Jesus Christ

¹ The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanses our consciences.

² This letter was found in the episcopal archives of Terracina among the letters of St. Gaspar to Monsignor Manassi.

Venerable Monsignor

Do not think at all about holding ordination for the approaching ember days. It will not be necessary for you to be concerned at all. It is not the will of God. You will be able to do that in September and those to be ordained will be a bit more mature. Rather, for ordinations, a half-year longer is better than a half-year less.

Then, in particular, with reference to Deacon Rossi who is in the boarding-school in Terracina, I ask that you reserve his ordination for September. I have nothing against him, but in this way he will be even better prepared for the ministries. You, yourself, should try to follow this bit of counsel that I give you. I suggest that you make use of a bit of change of climate by coming to Albano where you can get around with the use of a sedan-chair. There will be no difficulty at all. Let me know when you would like to come and I will have rooms prepared. However, if you come to Rome, you can make use of the accommodations of *Buon Consiglio*, if you prefer, where the rooms are fairly adequate. For your meals, you can be helped by your own people. Finally, let me know what you might be needing in Rome. It would be a disappointment for me if I could not show you some complimentary treatment.

Toward the end of May, passing through Terracina on his return from Rome will be the bishop of Penne³ who has with him only two priests and one layman. Would you be able to lodge him for only one night in your episcopal quarters, without any worry at all about food or anything else. He has been very kind to our people. In our own House in Terracina, up to now, we simply do not have sufficient accommodations to lodge him. Otherwise, he will go to Locanda. Speak to me with complete candor.

Your humble servant

G. C. del Bufalo

M. Ap.

Rome, May 9⁴

3954

May 18, 1826

Monsignor Carlo Manassi

Bishop of Terracina, Sezze and Priverno

Priverno

*Erit Sanguis Agni vobis in signum*⁵

Venerable Monsignor

In reply to your most esteemed letter, I say that you have acted well in reserving the ordinations until September because at that time you can handle the function yourself. I am very hopeful, through the merits of the Divine Blood, of Mary most holy and our St. Xavier. Likewise, I hope, too, that the ordination ceremony will be a most fervent one. Starting now, let us keep on praying.

I understand what you tell me about the baths in Naples. *Honora medicum propter*

³ Monsignor Domenico Ricciardoni (1758-1845), bishop of Ari and Penne from 1818 to 1845.

⁴ The date does not include the year but, as is apparent from other letters of this period of time which refer to the bishop of Penne, it belongs, without doubt, to 1826.

⁵ The Blood of the Lamb will be a sign for you.

necessitatem.⁶ In regard to this, I would like you to send me a petition, in your own handwriting, for the Holy Father asking for a subsidy *pro hac vice*.⁷ Please do this. I will find a way of getting it to him. Oh! would that I had a way of coming to your assistance. How greatly happy that would make me!

The wine from Madera⁸ is excellent; take a spoonful of it a quarter of an hour before eating. You will feel it work. With regard to the trip of the bishop of Penne, let us let things happen as simply as possible.

A thought just occurred to me and it is that you should have someone provide you with a small cord of the angelic St. Thomas for your difficulty. You should wear it, but only out of devotion; it will not be the cause of the least inconvenience to your suffering humanity. I am confident that, with your practice of vibrant faith, it will be of great help to you.

I hope that the Retreats there were successful. Right now, I am giving thought to Sezze and Terracina. Your illness and the absence of Canon Locatelli for Aquila are the reasons for this small variation in arranging the time.

I kiss your hands and with full esteem, I remain

Your humble servant

G. C. del Bufalo

M. Ap.

Rome, May 18, 1826

P. S. Always keep me informed with news about yourself, for I am very desirous of having it.

The Treasurer⁹ would like to have a listing of the obligatory Masses in our church in Sonnino. Please enclose that for me. Perhaps you have already done that. "Turn the page".

On the first Sunday in July, in Sonnino, the boarding-school, like the one in Giano, will be opened. Presently, the locale is being prepared. At that time, there will be a full family there. I will be sending some new priests to Sermoneta. If you think that it is a good idea, let me know whether I am authorized, after having a previous examination conducted by one of our older men, to permit them, in time, to hear confessions, though getting your document after your return from Naples. Otherwise, I am perfectly happy to have them take the public exam. You arrange things as you see fit. I would like for them to be hearing confessions a month later than a month before.

The church is in dire need of true workers; in fact, that is what we mean when we say: "*rogate Dominum ut mittat operarios*",¹⁰ and "*non tantum presbyteros*"¹¹ etc. Oh how good it would be for your own men, before receiving sacred orders, to stay for a certain amount of time in our boarding-school which would offer them a more elevated education than that given in the seminaries! From there, they will also come out as wonderful pastors etc. As you probably know, Terracina is a House well-equipped with our members. In everything, praise be to God.

I have already set up a Retreat for Maenza in June. That will follow along with our solemn month in Sermoneta. Now I am looking into Bassiano. Let me know also what time Roccagorga

⁶ Honor the doctor out of necessity.

⁷ For this time.

⁸ Cf. Additional Biographical Data: Severini, Vincenzo.

⁹ Monsignor Bellisario Cristaldi.

¹⁰ Pray the Lord of the harvest to send workers.

¹¹ Not only priests.

would like to have.

At the beginning of August, the Mission in Sonnino. Next Sunday the Retreat in Sezze will begin. If I have overlooked anything else, remind me. Furthermore, I would like you to set as a basic principle that in Terracina, Sonnino, and Sermoneta, the Lenten preaching will be handled by our men. I would like to know this in plenty of time as is done in Pievetorina etc. With difficulty do the Communes find people to do this. Our Society presently is enjoying a very strong development. Canon Carboneri has already arrived in Zante and, *Deo dante*,¹² will do marvelous work. Try to introduce, wherever you can, the public devotion to the Divine Blood as well as the sanctified month, etc. If you need booklets, I will send them as soon as I can.

May Jesus be the love of our hearts. I urge the establishment of oratories everywhere, and may you be strong in the face of difficulties.

When you are a bit more advanced in age, you can then withdraw to one of our Houses and boarding-schools to help form the new plants etc. and, if it please God, to have another Missionary succeed you in Terracina etc. Now, it is up to you to keep moving forward with courage and also *aegra valetudine multa facies etc.*¹³

Father Marcellino Brandimarte is returning to our group. I was pleased with his insistence, etc. Stress with your clergy the study of moral cases, the wearing of the cassock, making a Retreat, mental prayer made in common before the case-work, and with reference to the oratories, remind them that, at one time in the past, there was not a head of the family who, after having covered all the affairs of the day, did not, at night, present himself before the Lord. The work of the oratory recalls everything; also prayers in public etc.

Send Locatelli for the Retreat in S. Felice.

3955

May 23, 1826

Monsignor Carlo Manassi
Bishop of Terracina, Sezze and Priverno
Priverno

Hail etc.

Venerable Monsignor

I am keeping in mind the Mission for Sonnino. It will be sufficient that you give the order since the people there wish to have it in August; the Jubilee observance will be covered. The decision lies with you.

As for other matters, *ad alias*.¹⁴ Missionary Father de Victoriis has already initiated the Retreat in Terracina.

Let me know when Roccagorga wishes to have their Retreat.

The Vicar has already written to me concerning Maenza. I kiss your hands. Take very good care of your health. I remain

*Suo infimo in Christo servo*¹⁵

¹² God being the giver.

¹³ He spoke much about his ill health, etc.

¹⁴ For another time.

¹⁵ Being his lowest servant in Christ.

G. C. del Bufalo

M. Ap.

Rome, May 23, 1826

Please write a line or so to the Commune of Terracina so that they will provide some alms to the Houses for the purchase of food products and for the travel expenses of the Missionary conducting the Retreat etc.

From a nun who is in another monastery in your diocese, who had previously been in Sonnino, try to find out the obligation of Masses, or, you might write to the chancery in Sezze. Canon Locatelli probably does not know about this except by hearsay, etc., etc..

3956

May 27, 1826

Monsignor Carlo Manassi

Bishop of Terracina, Sezze and Priverno

Terracina

Hail to the Blood of Jesus Christ

Venerable Monsignor

The bishop of Penne and Atri, a most worthy prelate, will be passing through there. If you have room to receive him in the episcopal quarters, the others can be set up in the *Collegio* and in one of our Mission Houses. Pray for me. While kissing your hands, venerable Monsignor, I remain, with esteem and respect

Your humble, devoted and obliged servant

G. C. del Bufalo

M. Ap.

Rome, May 27, 1826

P. S. Note that the Monsignor is accustomed to the same frugality as the Missionaries.

3957

May 27, 1826

Monsignor Carlo Manassi

Bishop of Terracina, Sezze and Priverno

Terracina

Hail to the Divine Blood

Venerable Monsignor

With an extreme shortage of time, I find it necessary to tell you the following things:

1. His Holiness has granted this favor for you: "to the Pro-Datary cardinal: for a congruous subsidy". Presently, Vizzeri, to whom I submitted the request as strongly as I could, will be handling the matter.

2. Merlini will be going to Sonnino to conduct the month of the Divine Blood. Half-way through that, I am planning to send two new and effective speakers who will give the Mission in preparation for the great feastday. Let me know whether you approve. Right now, a full community is being activated there.

3. I am considering Roccaorga and I say the same for Maenza, Bassiano and Sermoneta.

Send Locatelli to S. Felice.¹⁶

4. In the community in Sermoneta, I have two of our priests who do not hear confessions. Would you empower me to allow them to hear confession when I find them fit? Write and let me know what I am to do and with whom, during your absence, I should consult.

5. The bishop of Penne will be passing through. But, if you are unable to provide, etc., refer him to the *Collegio*, if you agree.

6. Always keep me abreast with news of yourself and, please, do not ignore this piece of advice.

7. The ordination will be held in September and fruitfully, I hope. If I have overlooked anything, kindly remind me since the extensive occupations of my work turn me into something of a blockhead.

We laugh to the glory of God. I kiss your hands. Encourage the Commune to provide something for our Society which is doing such good work, etc..

*Suo infimo in Christo servo*¹⁷

G. C. del Bufalo

M. Ap.

Rome, May 27¹⁸

Have a meeting concerning the *Collegio* and publicly set up the basic principles. With the year far-advancing, a decision is to be made whether it is prudent to dismiss the young men. Perhaps there is another more prudent possibility, etc.. *Ita in insipientia*.¹⁹

3958

Beginning of June, 1826

Monsignor Carlo Manassi

Bishop of Terracina, Sezze and Priverno

Terracina

Hail to the most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ

Venerable Monsignor²⁰

Concerning the well-known affair,²¹ you can be certain of absolute secrecy. I will take care of the expression of thanks. You keep good care of yourself and, without having to suffer the hardship of writing to me, it will be sufficient for me that, by some means or other, I will continue to get news of your progress. I am hoping for a special grace for you; for this I will be praying to St. Xavier.

You acted very wisely in having a doctor come from Gaeta. I repeat that in whatever way at all that I can be of assistance, please give me your command. I am presently preaching the month of

¹⁶ S. Felice Circeo

¹⁷ To his lowest servant in Christ.

¹⁸ The year is not given, but it is 1826 as is easily deduced from the other letters of this period of time.

¹⁹ [Thus in foolishness.] This postscript is found near the address.

²⁰ This letter does not have a date, but it is certain that it belongs to 1826 and that it was written after the letter (n. 3957) of May 27th, more precisely, in June. In fact, St. Gaspar says that he is preaching the month of the most Precious Blood which, at that time, was observed in June. In 1826, it began on June 4th. So, the letter is probably from the beginning of June.

²¹ This is the subsidy provided by Pope Leo XII which is mentioned in the letter (n. 3957) of May 27, 1826.

the Divine Blood. I incessantly keep thinking about you and I am truly sorry about your state of health. God looks into my heart. I kiss your hands. Venerable Monsignor, at the foot of the Cross of Jesus, I remain, with all my love

Your humble, devoted and obliged servant

G. C. del Bufalo

M. Ap.

Have them insert the Collect: *pro episcopo infirmo*.²²

3959

June 11, 1826

Monsignor Carlo Manassi

Bishop of Terracina, Sezze and Priverno

Terracina

Hail to the Blood of Jesus Christ

Venerable Monsignor

In reply to your letter, I tell you that I am most hopeful in St. Xavier in behalf of your cure. However, let us not cease praying *in humilitate cordis*.²³ Your proposals are quite appropriate in seeking to obtain evermore from God the gift of health. I hope that there will be an accompaniment of the most copious blessings. In addition, I feel inspired that you, in order to obtain the grace during this month, should add to your proposals that, upon obtaining a cure, you will offer a silver heart to the miraculous Crucifix in S. Nicola, on the day of the most august title of the Divine Blood, as a perpetual remembrance etc. This will involve an expense of no more than one *scudo*. I submit all of this to your consideration, for you know only too well how great my wretchedness is.

Then, too, I do not cease suggesting a stay in our House in Albano where you can spend the hot months. After the autumnal rains, you will be able to return to your dioceses. However, check with your doctor. Religious quiet, the advantages of shady walks, what more can I say, seem to be things that will be restorative of your strength. The doctor will decide. Finally, I offer you whatever I have and to whatever extent you judge me capable, and I would deem it unforgivable to be at all sparing. Here, in short, is all that I can say. Feel free to give me your commands. Let me know of anything you may need from Rome, anything that would be helpful for your stomach problem, such as *alkermas* or anything else. I repeat, have the doctor determine that. With all my heart, I am desirous to have you healthy again and with the most vivid trust, I ask this from God.²⁴ I kiss your hands. In Jesus Christ crucified, *in hoc augustissimo mense*,²⁵ I remain

*Suo infimo in Christo servo*²⁶

G. C. del Bufalo

M. Ap.

Rome, June 11, 1826

Whatever judgment the doctor may suggest to you, please let me know etc. Take care and be

²² For the infirm bishop.

²³ In humility of heart.

²⁴ Unfortunately, Manassi, who went to Naples for a cure, died after two months, August 19, 1826.

²⁵ On this most august table.

²⁶ Being his lowest servant in Christ.

happy in the Lord!

INTRODUCTION

This ninth volume of the *Epistolario di S. Gaspare del Bufalo*, which we entitle "Miscellany", contains letters that do not have a date, as well as those that do have a date but were found after the publication of the other volumes. In all, there are 177 letters, arranged in accordance with the placement they have in the volumes preserved in the General Archives CPPS.

Furthermore, also published in this volume is the deposition which the Ursuline, Sister Maria Giuseppe Pitorri, gave in 1847 at the Ordinary Process in Rome for the canonization of St. Gaspar;

in it there are forty-four very interesting citations from letters of spiritual direction. Unfortunately, those letters written by St. Gaspar to this religious have been lost. Forty-five selections from the letters to Sister Pitorri are also cited in the deposition of Monsignor Antonio Santelli; these we add to those of the deposition of Sr. Pitorri.

After the Index of addressees and the General Index for the ninth volume, there is a listing of errata that are to be corrected, discovered in the already published volumes.

With the termination of the publication of the *Epistolario di S. Gaspare*, it is for me a joy and a duty to express my deep gratitude to Amelia Marazzi Galiano for her diligent work and assiduous collaboration.

Will this ninth volume be the final one of the *Epistolario di S. Gaspare*? We maintain that it will not be so. In fact, we are certain of that; if the search for the Saint's letters in diocesan archives as well as those of the state continues, many more will be discovered and they will be added to the 3796 that have been published up to now, including the 11 in the brief volume entitled *Chi e' il Missionario?* -- a collection of the circular letters written to the Missionaries on the occasion of their annual retreats -- plus the 3785 that appear in the nine volumes of the *Epistolario*.

Rome, January 5, 1992 Birthday of St. Gaspar

D. Beniamino Conti, CPPS

INTRODUCTION

This tenth volume of the "*Epistolario di San Gaspare Del Bufalo*" appeared like a "breath of wind". Towards the end of August, 1992, a report was made known that a priest of Sonnino (Latina), while doing research in the Episcopal Archives of Terracina (AVT) and recently appointed the curator of the Ministero dei Beni Culturali, had read under its guidance that there were some letters of St. Gaspar there. That was the mainspring that spurred us on to make four visits to those archives. The visit of September 9, 1992 produced the discovery of 114 new letters of St. Gaspar, 112 of them in folder 128 and two in folder 98, under the heading Curiali. The visit of November 24, 1992, fruitfully produced the discovery of 48 new letters of St. Gaspar, found in that same area, but distributed in other folders (101-127) containing the correspondence of Bishop Carlo Manassi, covering the years 1820-1826. The visit of December 1, 1992, a further and very patient gleaning from those folders resulted in the discovery of still another 8 letters. Finally, the visit of March 16, 1993, a final attempt to find one or the other letter which would fill out the void that existed between October 21, 1822 and March 7, 1823, gave us the consolation of unearthing two more letters, but outside of the range of those dates: one to Father Sisto Rinaldi, the archpriest of Maenza, dated September 3, 1823 and another to Manassi, which in reality is simply a postscript of St. Gaspar added to a letter from Father Luca Giuliani, archpriest of Roccasecca, written on January 17, 1826.

To these 172 letters, two more are to be added: one to the Apostolic Delegate of Frosinone, Monsignor Giovanni Antonio Zacchia, and found in the State archives of Frosinone (ASF) when we visited those archives on September 24, 1992, along with another to Father Nicola Palma, discovered during the printing of the manuscript of the *LIFE of St. Gaspar* compiled by Monsignor Antonio Santelli, recently published under the direction of the undersigned.

So, in all, 174 new letters: 162 to Monsignor Manasse, 2 to Maria Agnese Priori and one for each of the following ten addressees, the first five of which are new: Father Marcellino Brandimarte, Father Giovanni Giusti, Father Sisto Rinaldi, Father Gaetano Sanguigni, Monsignor Giuseppe

Antonio Zacchia, Sister Maria Nazzarena De Castris, Father Luigi Locatelli, Father Nicola Palma, Father Pietro Pellegrini and Father Pietro Spina.

If we except the letters to Zacchia and to Palma, the other 172 letters were discovered in the AVT, that is, more precisely, those to the Priori lady in folder 98 containing the correspondence of Monsignor Francesco Albertini (AVf, Curiali, cart. 98) while the others are located in the folders that hold the correspondence of Manassi (AVT, Curiali, cart. 101-128). To facilitate our final consultation, the letters of St. Gaspar, found in the AVT, were all gathered together in folder 128, where the first, partial collection of the Saint's letters had been made (AVT, Curiali, cart. 128).

As a result of this discovery, the letters to Manassi in the *Epistolario di San Gaspare* now assume, numerically, the fourth position (165 letters, of which three of them were published in previous volumes) following those written to Monsignor Bellisario Cristaldi (279), to Camillo Possenti (238) and Luigia Del Bufalo (196).

Since almost the totality of the letters gathered in this tenth volume of the *Epistolario di San Gsspare* are addressed to Manassi (162 of the 174), we felt obliged to put as a sub-title to it, *Lettere a Mons. Carlo Manassi*. This correspondence covers the years 1820-1826, the time period during which Manassi was the bishop of the dioceses of Terracina, Sezze and Priverno. But the letters to the other addressees also belong to this period of time with the exception of the one to the Priori lady and the one to Locatelli which belong to October-December, 1819.

It is imperative, consequently, to briefly describe the figure of Manassi, particularly in his relationship with St. Gaspar, in order to get some idea of the precious value of this letter-correspondence.

MONSIGNOR CARLO MANASSI

Monsignor Carlo Cavalieri Manassi was born in Comacchio (Ferrara) on February 12, 1770. He was ordained priest on May 25, 1793 and on April 10, 1794 was graduated with degrees in church and civil law by the University of Bologna. On January 9, 1795, he was named pro-synodal examiner of the diocese of Comacchio; on April 5, 1795, a canon of the cathedral; on September 5, 1799, the pro-Vicar General of Comacchio; on November 16, 1817, a Protonotary apostolic; on April 5, 1819, the Vicar General of Comacchio. For many years he was the Rector and professor of dogmatic theology in the diocesan seminary. On February 21, 1820, he was named bishop of Terracina, Sezze and Priverno after the death of Monsignor Francesco Albertini (November 24, 1819). He was ordained bishop in Rome on February 27, 1820 by Cardinal Alessandro Mattei.

Among the more notable facts revealed in his letter-writing, significant, certainly, is the attack of the brigand Alessandro Massaroni and his band upon the seminary of Terracina on January 23, 1821, along with the abduction of around 20 individuals of the teachers and students who were held prisoners in the mountains for almost ten days. Two of them were brutally murdered, notwithstanding the payment of two thousand *scudi* ransom by Pius VII for their release together with Manassi's pectoral cross which he wished to add along with some *scvdi* and other precious objects. This f rightful situation deeply alarmed everyone, especially the poor bishop himself. as a result, he was advised to go back to Comacchio for several months, particularly because the rumor had gotten around that the brigands were out to get him, as Manassi himself reveals in detail to St. Gaspar in reply to a letter of March 5, 1821. This is, in fact, how Monsignor Antonio Santelli

recounts the episode in his *Vitadel canonico don Gaspare Del Bufalo*:

"Aat that time, [Manassi], just by chance, came to the knowledge that the intent of those brigands was to get their hands on him. After learning of their plots of ambush, treachery and capture, and prudently considering the danger involved, it appeared that the time had come to betake himself to Rome with the accompaniment of a good escort. There, he first presented to the Pontiff the unhappy status of his besieged diocese. Later, for the sake of comfort, he made a trip back to Comacchio, his home town.²⁷

Having returned, then, to his diocese at the urgent appeal of St. Gaspar, he continued zealously to exercise his pastoral office, making himself available to collaborate with St. Gaspar in many Missions with the identification as a Missionary of the most Precious Blood *in subsidium*.²⁸ St. Gaspar became acquainted with Manassi at the end of July of 1819, when he went to preach Missions in Comacchio and in other principal places of that diocese. The idea for conducting these Missions probably came up in Rome on the occasion of the episcopal ordination of the new bishop for Comacchio, Monsignor Michele Virgili. He was ordained bishop by Cardinal Alessandro Mattei in the church of S. Nicola in Carcere along with Monsignor Francesco Albertini on April 18, 1819. The entire ceremony was prepared and directed by St. Gaspar who, then, was invited to the dinner by the Cardinal together with the two bishops²⁹. On that occasion, upon hearing Cardinal Mattei and Albertini speak about the Missions that St. Gaspar was slated to conduct in 1819 and 1820 in their dioceses, namely, in Velletri and Terracina, Sezze and Priverno³⁰, Monsignor Virgili expressed the desire of having Missions held in his diocese, too. This desire became an explicit invitation at the time St. Gaspar, during the months of May, June and July, was preaching Missions in the diocese of Camerino.³¹

Despite the hard work of the Missions, carried on continuously for another three months, and, despite the fact that Monsignor Bellisario Cristaldi advised him not to go to Comacchio during that summer period because of the danger of death³², still St. Gaspar replied that he had such good reasons to accept those Missions in the diocese of Comacchio that he could not help but go there. The trip from Giano in Umbria to Comacchio turned out to be almost an odyssey. We allow Santelli to give us the description:

"The Canon and his companions had not a little to suffer on this uncomfortable trip, since their guide, one who was inexperienced, got way off the correct route and got them stuck in the soft mud in which the wheels of the carriage sunk into the ruts and the horses were able to move slowly, scarcely a mile an hour. Furthermore, in that deserted area there was no one around who could lend them a bit of food, so that as a result, they were forced to observe a fast for a longer period of time than they ever needed. Merrily they spent more than one day without food, but superabundantly comforted by the desire to give glory to God and bring salvation to souls. Then, in Ravenna, many,

²⁷ A. Santelli, *Vita del canonico don Gaspare Del Bufalo. Missionario Apostolico*, Roma, 1992, 491.

²⁸ The decree naming Monsignor Manassi as a perpetual Missionary of the Archconfraternity of the most Precious Blood was issued on March 12., 1820 and is found in the AVT, Curiali, cart. 101). It is signed by St. Gaspar as the Director General of the Missions of the Archconfraternity of the most Precious Blood, and by Father Luigi Locatelli as the secretary.

²⁹ Cfr. A. Santelli, *o. c.*, 359

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ Cfr. *ibid.*, 345

³² Cfr. *Epistolario di San Gaspare*, I, Roma 1986, 344.

with friendly words addressed humbly to the Canon, as a bit of advice for his good and that of his companions, showed disapproval of their trip during that season, and related to them the account of other workers who had gone there with the same purpose in mind, and who became victims of death. Therefore, they advised them to return home with God's blessing. Finally, after all that evil work perpetrated by the infernal enemy, and most certain of the harm that could come to them, he happily reached the canal to the Adriatic Sea on July 26 at the 21st hour ³³, that is, around five o'clock.

“On that same day, the Mission began. The Vicar General of the diocese, Monsignor Carlo Manassi, took an active part, bringing about good results of the Missions in Comacchio and in the diocese where St. Gaspar and his Missionaries remained for almost a month.

“In this period of time, St. Gaspar and Manassi had the opportunity of getting to know each other better reciprocally. So, at the time when the episcopal see of Terracina, Sezze and Priverno became vacant upon the death of Monsignor Francesco Albertini, St. Gaspar, in order to distract the attention of Pius VII toward himself, gave the name of Manassi to Cristaldi.”

That is how the narration of the facts is given in the *Vita* written by Santelli, the author who, as usual, has been well-informed. He continues:

“When Monsignor Albertini had passed from this life and the episcopal see of Terracina become vacant, Pius VII had the intention of placing in it Canon Del Bufalo, since he held him in the highest esteem and recommended him as most effective as an expert Missionary, and one who would be able to control the ferocity of the people there by providing them with the basic principles of religion. When this thought was conveyed to Cristaldi to get him to ask Gaspar, the latter, after hearing the arguments, quickly refused, humbly asserting the reason that to abandon the Institute while it was still in its nascent state, and something that God willed, would be the same as suffocating it in its swaddling clothes, and thus going against the divine will. That is what he said and he begged Monsignor Cristaldi, who held a high position with Pius VII, to promise him that he would do everything within his power to get the Pontiff to set aside that intention. He attended the audience and as a valiant man he spoke very convincingly, so that the Pope, once convinced that it was the greater good, then added: ‘Well, since he does not wish to accept, propose another capable person for that diocese’.

“That is when the thought came to his mind that it should be the Vicar General of Comecchio, well-known to him because of the Missions there, a most worthy subject for that appointment. Areal priest, in piety, in learning and in zeal for souls along with being quite outstanding for his prudence in governing. Furthermore, accustomed as he was to the unhealthy air of the swamp lands, the area in which he was born, also indicated that it was a most certain thing that he would be a great help to that diocese where he was supposed to go. With the Pope being satisfied with this nomination and after mature thought, he wanted first that Del Bufalo speak with the highly- regarded Vicar General about the matter to see whether he would accept it. Two of his letters to Monsignor Cristaldi have been preserved. The first, dated December 21, 1819, mentions the steps he has already negotiated: ‘Please send back to me, when you have the opportunity, the letter that I sent to you from Comacchio. You probably noted in it what was said to me in regard to what is predicable dealing with the well-known individual; and in the other of the 26th of that same month, it says: “Last night I wrote quickly to Comacchio and, *fuso calamo*, I tried to bring warmth to

³³ A. Santelli, *o. c.* , 346-367.

the situation. I hope that the Lord will bless our efforts". Finally, with the aforementioned Vicar General submitting to the will of the Pontiff, the new election of Monsignor Carlo Manassi, one of the most famous bishops of Terracina, was a cause for common joy. I was fortunate to have made his acquaintance in Rome and I saw the esteem that priests of high standing held for him as well as that of two popes. He was distinguished, likewise, for a very fervent devotion to the Divine Blood and to the Institute of Missionaries who, in honoring him, promoted his glorious achievements.

"When he was elected bishop, it was his pleasure to make known in confidence to some of the Missionaries a prediction that was made to him by a feminine servant of God, endowed with celestial gifts, who referred to the greatness of the spirit of Del Bufalo with the following words: "at some time a luminous ray, issuing from the Vatican, will arrive in Comacchio, and you will be made a bishop". This was confirmed as being clearly verified by the famous Monsignor Manassi at the time when the aforementioned subject arrived for that Mission." ³⁴

The esteem that Manassi conceived for St. Gaspar, who was sixteen years younger, was very great. Reciprocally, they developed a very profound and sincere friendship which is clearly manifested in the letters that we are publishing. In regard to these letters, Santelli writes:

"We must not be silent about the fact that whenever Monsignor Manassi received letters from Del Bufalo, he was moved with esteem and veneration for him and he would kiss them and, after removing what he had on his head, he would place them there, ³⁵, because, as Merlini tells us, 'he considered him to be a saint'. "³⁶

This same impression was made known likewise during the processes held in Terracina in the testimony of Vincenzo Donati, Manassi's administrator ³⁷, on May 27, 1868:

"I can add that when Canon Del Bufalo wrote to Monsignor Manassi, bishop of Terracina, when I was present I saw the most reverend bishop kiss the letters that had come to him from Canon Del Bufalo, while saying: 'One day you will be adoring [sic] this man on the altars'. "³⁸

So, Monsignor Manassi considered St. Gaspar as a father and spiritual model and he also exhorted other people to place themselves under his direction as happened, for example, with the nun Sister Maria Nazzarena De Castris in the Monastero della Sacra Famiglia in Sezze ³⁹, as well as with Canon Father Vincenzo Ungaretti of the collegiate group in Roccasecca. To the latter, Manassi, on October 19, 1821, wrote a letter in which he expressed his exalted esteem for St. Gaspar: "If this letter of mine should get to you before the arrival of that holy man, Can. Del Bufalo, a great Missionary who is coming there, because of a very grave cause pertaining to the glory of God, I urge you not to miss the opportunity of drawing close to him. In fact, I exhort you to make yourself his disciple just as I am. And I am honored to be that." ⁴⁰ Once you have introduced yourself to him and

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 375-376

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 635. Cfr. G. Merlini, *Gaspare Del Bufalo un santo scruta un santo*, Roma-Albano 1984, 625. Merlini says: "...he used to kiss the letters from the Servant of God and would devoutly press them to his forehead".

³⁶ G. Merlini, *o. c.*, 632.

³⁷ Cfr. in this Volume the letter of St. Gaspar to Manassi, dated September 28, 1822.

³⁸ *Scritti del Fondatore*, XVIII, 96

³⁹ Cfr. *ibid.*, 464 and 604.

⁴⁰ The underlining is ours. In all probability, Monsignor Manassi entrusted himself to the spiritual direction of St. Gaspar shortly before he wrote to Canon Ungaretti, as seems to be suggested by the following sentences of the Saint, contained in the letter to Manassi, dated October 9, 1821: "I give thanks to God for the feelings that you nurture for the glory of God and for your own sanctification, all blending together in perfect harmony with the virtues that you

paid him your respects, tell him that you are there to help him and accompany him as he wishes. Tell him that you are the young man from Piperno about whom I spoke to him so that you might be trained under his direction to be able to become experienced in the work of the Missions. Tell him immediately that you are not capable. But, then, were the apostles capable before the coming of the Holy Spirit? Courage. ⁴¹

Along with the esteem of Manassi for St. Gaspar, we must likewise acknowledge the sincere esteem that St. Gaspar had for Manassi, both for his learning as for his holiness and apostolic zeal. Thus, in his letter of January 21, 1825, the Saint expresses his feeling in reference to a rumored substitution for Manassi: "I likewise give thanks to God for the firmness you show to remain in your dioceses. Curate Gabrieli, whom I know well, has not ⁴²provided all the activity that you have etc. and, only with difficulty (let this be said for the glory of God) could one find at present another Monsignor Manassi. I fear that your transfer would be more truly a chastisement rather than an act of mercy". Numerous other testimonies of his esteem and sincere affection for Manassi can be easily found in this letter-collection.

When Manassi became gravely ill ⁴³ towards the end of March of 1826, St. Gaspar showed complete concern about him. He invited him to come to Albano or to Rome for a change of air, but, upon the advice of the doctors as well as a subsidy granted by Leo XII which was obtained through the efforts of St. Gaspar, Manassi in the following June went to Naples to undergo thermal treatments. Notwithstanding the prayers and the good wishes that St. Gaspar offered ⁴⁴, the sickness worsened and Monsignor Manassi died on August 19, 1826. Cardinal Luigi Ruffo Scilla, Archbishop of Naples, saw to it that "impressive funeral arrangements were made" ⁴⁵, as the Delegate of Frosinone Monsignor Giovanni Antonio Benvenuti writes in a letter of August 23, 1826 to the Secretary of State, Cardinal Giulio Maria Della Somaglia, who, in his turn, expressed his own deep-felt sorrow for the death of Manassi, stating that "such a loss is most sorrowful because of the loss of the virtuous activity and pastoral zeal that were so characteristic of this man and that were

demonstrate. along with De Sales, I will say: 'Here I am, a reed upon which you are leaning. You are safe because that is how God is inspiring you, but the reed itself is worth nothing'. at any rate, miserable thing that I am, I shall not cease praying; do not be fearful of my openness and I hope that you will be just as open to me whenever the situation calls for it. We will be of help to each other on the road toward heaven so that we will both reach that blessed goal".

⁴¹ *Scritti del Fondatore*, XVIII, 70.80.

⁴² Cfr. in this Volume the letter of St. Gaspar to Manassi, dated September 28, 1822.

⁴³ We do not know with precision the nature of that illness, but from some of the letters we can get some fairly clear ideas: it was a matter of a disturbance in the urinary tract. In fact, from a letter dated May 9, 1826 written by Silverio Vizzeri, Manassi's procurator in Rome, we know that the latter sent him by way of a coach-driver "two crystal urinary devices and another two made of elastic rubber, which are very durable and the more convenient type to be used beneath the trousers... If the opening is too narrow, by putting them in hot water, they can be dilated to the extent that you wish" (AVT, Curiali, cart. 126; XIX, 975a). In a letter of Dr. Leopoldo Pilari, written from Comacchio on May 19, 1826, it clearly states that Manassi was subject to "urinary incontinence" and that the cause for that was "one or more stones". After explaining the different treatments that were customarily done in cases such as these, he adds: "However, I would not undergo those treatments except under the direction of capable doctors under whose care I advise you to place yourself... to betake yourself to Naples where very capable doctors are available and where, at the same time you will be able to breathe a more healthful air" (Ibid., XIX, 795c-795e). Also, Canon Feletti, in a letter of his to Manassi dated June 12, 1826 speaks about the trouble with "dysuria" (cfr. AVIT, Curiali, cart. 126).

⁴⁴ Cfr. , e. g. , the letters of May 18 and June 11, 1826.

⁴⁵ AGF, *Delegazione Apostolica*, cart. 1317, fasc. 3505 - Terracina 1826.

brought to the benefit of those dioceses..."⁴⁶

The news concerning the grave illness first and then the death later of Manassi was deeply felt by St. Gaspar. Writing to Monsignor Bellisario Cristaldi on August 21, 1826, he expresses himself as follows: "I cannot express to you how deeply felt is this loss which effects in my poor humanness an indescribable suffering"⁴⁷. Nevertheless, I am fully resigned to do the will of God who has called him back to himself as "ripened fruit for Heaven"⁴⁸, as he wrote on September 4, 1826 to Lorenzo Colognesi, Manassi's brother-in-law. He has numbered him among his celestial advocates along with Albertini. In fact, to Sister Maria Nazzarena De Castris, on October 7, 1828, in reference to the re-opening of the Houses in Terracina and Sonnino, he expresses himself, saying: "Let vs pray for the two Mission Houses of Terracina and Sonnino. Monsignor Albertini and Monsignor Manassi will look after them".⁴⁹

With the discovery and the publication of these letters, a notable contribution is made not only to the direct knowledge of the profound relationship existing between St. Gaspar and Manassi, but to a fuller acknowledgment of the dedication of our Saint and his Missionaries to the work of the spiritual reform of the northern area of the Lazio area in accordance with the plan approved of by Pius VII in October of 1821. Furthermore, they provide us various dates which assist us in determining better the chronology of the life of St. Gaspar.

We are, consequently, very grateful to all those who, in one way or another, have assisted with the publication of this volume which was a thing totally unexpected in our immediate expectations.⁵⁰

EDITORIAL CRITERIA

For the editing of this volume, we have followed the same criteria as those of preceding volumes.⁵¹

The transcription of the letters was made from photocopies of the originals, some of which are in pretty bad shape of preservation.. Where the photocopies are difficult to read, the transcription was made to agree accurately with the originals. Thus, we can assure with moral certainty that the texts that was present are truly faithful to the originals.

As was stated before, the original letters of St. Gaspar are preserved in the AVT, and photocopies were gathered into Volume XIX of the *Scritti del Fondatore*, observing the enumeration that we give in the volume.

The citations from the *Vita* written by Santelli are taken from the recently published volume.⁵²

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Epistolario di San Gaspare*, IV, letter no. 1491, 223

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, letter no. 1497, 228-229.

⁴⁹ *Epistolario di San Gaspare*, V, Roma 1968, 153.

⁵⁰ We express our gratitude to Father Pietro Altobelli, a priest in Sonnino, who brought to our notice, through our confrere Father Romano Altobelli, the news that in the AVT there were letters of St. Gaspar; to Father Enzo Avelli, secretary of Monsignor Domenico Pecile, bishop of Latina, who, in the name of the bishop, granted us access to the archives; to Father Gianni Checchinato, pastor of the cathedral in Terracina and to the seminarian Giuseppe Fantozzi for having been of assistance in any need that we had during our period of research; to our confrere Father Michele Colagiovanni for the help that he gave in the discovery of some of the letters.

⁵¹ Cfr. *Epistolario di San Gaspare*, I (1808-1820), Roma, 1986, 10-14.

⁵² A. Santelli, *Vita del canonico don Gaspare Del Bufalo Missionario Apostolico*, Ed. Priniavsra 92, Rome

This tenth volume of the *Epistolario* is composed of an *Introduction*, the text and the notes of 174 letters and indexes. After the index of addressees and the general index of this present volume, we have added an *Appendix* with three items: 1. the chronological index of all the letters to Manassi appearing in the *Epistolario di San Gaspare*; 2. The chronological index of all the letters of St. Gaspar from October 24, 1819 (the first letter of this present collection) to June 11, 1826 (the last letter of this present collection) to go along with the chronological insertion of his final letters found among those in the *Epistolario*; 3. the index of the names of all the addressees of the entire *Epistolario di San Gaspare*, thus including also the five names of the new addressees contained in this volume. In this way, we have sought to bring up to date the principal facts in the volume containing the General Index of the *Epistolario di San Gaspare Del Bufalo*, I, Roma, 1992.

With this tenth volume, the *Epistolario di S. Gaspare* reaches the number 3959 published “letters” to which are added the eleven circular letters written on the occasion of the annual Retreat, but are not included in that enumeration. Totally, therefore, there are 3970 “letters”.

Encouraged by this recent “catch”, something so unexpected yet so very bountiful, is it possible to express the wish of even surpassing this height?

Beniamino Conti, C.P.P.S.